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A

SERMON

PREACHED IN

SAINT JOHN'S CHURCH, PROVIDENCE,

ON

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 19, 1865,

THE DAY APPOINTED FOR THE

Funeral Obsequies of President Lincoln,

BY THE

REV. RICHARD B. DUANE,
ASSISTANT RECTOR.

PROVIDENCE:
H. H. THOMAS & CO., OFFICE OF THE DAILY PRESS.
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PROVIDENCE, 21 APRIL, 1865.

DEAR SIR:

The undersigned, having listened with great satisfaction to the sermon preached by you in St. John's Church, on Wednesday, 19th inst., in commemoration of the death of President Lincoln, and believing that the cause of Christian patriotism would be promoted by a wider diffusion of the sentiments uttered by you on that occasion, respectfully request that you will furnish a copy of the discourse for publication.

We are, very truly, your friends,

PHILIP ALLEN,
WM. S. SLATER,
S. C. BLODGET,
WILLIAM BINNEY,
R. M. SHERMAN,
HENRY H. ORMSBEE,
J. S. ORMSBEE,
THOS. P. SHEPARD,
ROBERT H. IVES,
WILLIAM GODDARD,
ZACHARIAH ALLEN,
WILLIAM D. ELY,
E. W. HOWARD,
T. P. I. GODDARD.

To Rev. RICHARD B. DUANE, Asst. Rector of St. John's Church.

ST. JOHN'S RECTORY, April 25, 1865.

GENTLEMEN:

Your note of the 21st inst., requesting for publication a copy of the sermon preached at St. John's Church on the 19th, has been received, and the sermon is sent herewith, with great pleasure, in the hope that it will subserve the purpose for which you desire it.

I am faithfully yours,

RICH'D B. DUANE,
Assistant Rector.

Messrs. PHILIP ALLEN, WM. S. SLATER, S. C. BLODGET, and others.

SERMON.

"Rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he is the minister of GOD to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of GOD, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil."

[ROMANS, 13 : 3, 4.

IN the last remarkable Inaugural Address of the now departed President, we find the following language: "As was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, that 'the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.'"

It has seemed to me that it is our first duty on this occasion of heavy sorrow to reiterate this truth. "The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether." We bow our heads and hearts before this stroke of GOD, confessing His sovereignty and our sins. But let us not forget His grace and loving kindness. He will be entreated of us. In wrath He will remember mercy.

1. If the Almighty had been pleased to spare the valued life, so recently taken, to the close of another

four years' term of public service—if the late Chief Magistrate had retired once more to private life—and, in the quiet of his own home, had passed away from earth, there would have been, even then, much to call forth our sorrow at his death. There have been few public men who have a record such as his. He was a large-hearted, disinterested, honest, faithful man. High praise, this, but not one whit too high. As an individual, he had remarkable judgment—"great calmness of temper—great firmness of purpose—supreme moral principle—and intense patriotism." Or, as described in the prayer which we not long since offered to God, he set a bright "example of courage and constancy, meekness and patience, loyalty and fidelity." He was never fierce or vindictive under provocation—he never faltered in the dark hours—(when some who had been more intense in their heat grew cold and semi-disloyal)—he was not blown about by the winds of good or ill success—and never lost his moorings even when the waves raged most horribly. And therefore I say, that, as a public man alone, his death, had it come four or five, or even a score of years hence, would have created a profound feeling in our land.

2. The solemnity of the occasion is wonderfully enhanced when we know that this eminent public servant died while exercising supreme Executive power in the land, and that he died under the blow of an assassin. This death seems to come to us ever and anon as if we had but just heard of it. We renew our experience of the first intelligence as it

came to us, and say from day to day, "Our President murdered!" It was indeed a huge crime—it was a dastardly act—to strike down an unsuspecting, unresisting man. It was part of a plot to murder many, perhaps, in cold blood. But still, simply as a crime against *one man*, it seems to me that it rises not to the magnitude of other crimes against the lives of men like it the outgrowth of the same pestilent rebellion. It was mean to take by stealth the life of the defenceless, in an hour of supposed security; but think, my friends, of the hundreds and thousands of our unarmed and defenceless prisoners, who had yielded themselves to the enemy, whose lives have been destroyed—who have been frozen to death—have been starved to death—have sickened and died in the pens where they were herded like cattle. If the late murder and its accompanying murderous assault stood alone, we might attribute them to the frenzy of a few fanatical men. But when we look across our maps, and read the names: "Belle Isle," "Salisbury," "Andersonville," we are compelled to think differently. We know that many died within sound of the bells of Richmond, and that such men as Jefferson Davis and Robert E. Lee stood by, consenting unto their death. We need not wonder, then, if the same fell spirit, which nerved the arm to strike down a Senator on the Senate floor, which called forth the plaudits of thousands approving that act, and which could inaugurate the cruelties of the Southern prisons, found an outflow in that act which robbed us of our Chief Magistrate.

3. The crime, however, rises into its gigantic enormity as we remember that it *was* the *Chief Magistrate* who was thus laid low. "The powers that be are ordained of GOD. Whosoever resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of GOD. . . . . He is the minister of GOD." What, then, must be the crime that thus strikes at the head of a nation, at a Ruler placed at its head by the Almighty Himself? It is in this light that we must view the deed. One man struck the blow—but the whole spirit of the rebellion was behind him, urging him on. The death accomplished was designed more than four years ago. Aye, even before the President-elect had taken his chair or uttered an official word, it was intended that he should die: and it was intended that the blow should reach the nation's life as well as his, and that anarchy should pave the way for the uprising of the new power in the land. All the work of the past four years—all the taking away of life from those who were defending the powers ordained of GOD—is of one pattern. We are no more able to glorify the generals of the South than the assassins of the South, if we but look at the true state of the case.

4. When we thus think of the official position of the departed, we are reminded of his eminent qualifications for that high station. These qualifications would have been eminent in the time of the profoundest peace, but they shone conspicuously indeed during the period of intestine conflict. Whatever may have been the fears of citizens during the four

years now past, the result has proved that our President was gifted with extraordinary political wisdom. It was only in a gradual way that men came to appreciate this fact. By some deemed too slow, by others too fast, time has proved that he was neither too slow nor too fast. He has always been at the helm himself, and with the grapple of a gigantic rebellion upon him,—with many real traitors and more half-hearted, sordid, cowardly tremblers where all ought to have been earnestly loyal, he has, by God's help, borne himself so nobly and courageously that even those who disapproved have been compelled to admire. He has died, as one says, "a martyr to the cause of good government, to the faithful discharge of duty, and to his earnest devotion to the rights of men."

We mourn, we weep at the loss of a true and tender man; we are bowed in grief at the removal of so wise and good a Ruler.

5. Let me attempt, now, to draw forth some of the lessons which we should derive from God's dealings with us during the past week. We may be tempted to put submission first: but let us put a more exalted feeling first—let it be gratitude—gratitude to God for having ever given us such a man to rule over us—especial gratitude for His having raised him up to meet the emergency, so little dreamed of by most of us, but so clearly discerned by God, and so amply provided for. We can well imagine what would have been our fate, if four years since a man less true, less disinterested, less

wise, less firm, had met the shock which came. God gave us this man:—and, moreover, God kept him through dangers on the right hand and on the left. God held His hand over him, and no evil came nigh to harm him till his work was done. We owe God gratitude for the preservation of his life. We were never so well able to bear the stroke as we were last week—never, never before—in the four years. How good God has been to us to send us the trial when we were best able to endure it. "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away: Blessed be the name of the Lord."

And see, too, how merciful God was to him, to allow him to see the coming of that end, for which he had given so many toils, had borne the contempt of men, themselves beneath contempt, and had endured so many griefs. He saw the dawning day. He had already spoken of the coming reconstruction, and with singular wisdom. His eyes had looked upon the stronghold, which had so long defied our armies; and over it was *the dear old flag!* Traitors flying—treason dying; the loyal masses grateful and triumphant. In one sense this was a choice hour in which to die: and in it he died—died without pain—sealing with his blood the testimony of his lips and life.

Thus we may mingle gratitude with our grief, and thanksgivings with our submission to the Almighty's will. We must weep—how can we fail to weep over a true man, a true friend to his country, to the whole people, to the poor, the abject, the

despised—*gone!* But we can better bear the loss as we remember what GOD has permitted us to gain.

6. Moreover, we may one day discern clearly, what seems probable now, that GOD in this providential taking away of our President, has saved us from other perils. We were in danger of being exalted beyond measure by our successes. Already some were uttering the old words of pride and self-sufficiency, for which GOD has rebuked us so fearfully. We were speedily forgetting the Great Deliverer, who sitteth in the heavens over all. GOD has mercifully not allowed us to forget Him. He has stepped forth in His might and majesty: He has laid His hand upon our country's best treasure and taken it away. He seems to say in our ears to-day—"See, oh! see, vainglorious men, how easily I can blight—how easily I might have ruined—how easily I may yet destroy." JEHOVAH teaches us the lesson of absolute dependence upon Him. Oh! that this people might learn it in their heart of hearts, and act it in their lives. And there was another danger into which we were drifting—into which some had already drifted, even our beloved President himself. It was a mistaken leniency towards the leaders in the army or in the cabinet of the insurgents. We felt it when it was first exhibited—we feel it more deeply now. This would have been a fearful error. This would be to put darkness for light—and light for darkness; to put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. It is some comfort to know now that this danger at least has passed away. Let us be grate-

ful for that. Thus much for our duty to God-ward.

We have our duties, also, as citizens, enforced upon us by this severe trial.

7. We meet to-day, as it were, over the dead body of the President—he was the President of *the* United States: and standing in that awful presence we clasp each other's hands with one accord, and renew our vows of allegiance to our country. We have a country. God being our helper, we mean to have one still. The thrust at the life of the man has been deadly: but before the country's life-blood can be drained away, a rampart of living millions must be thrown down.

We pledge ourselves anew to the most determined and resolute and unfading and unswerving opposition to Treason and to Traitors. "An outraged nation must henceforth regard the friends of *such* a rebellion as the enemies of the human race." We must understand and appreciate the inspired truth contained in the text from which I preach to-day. "There is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God." "If thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for" [the ruler] "beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil."

Oh! what a commentary we have been writing on this for the past four years! What a mighty sword has the minister of God, whom He placed over us as President, been wielding—bearing it not in vain! He has been executing wrath upon those who

brought this gigantic evil upon a country that had nurtured them, and a government that had never done them aught save good.

God, in His providence, did, last Saturday, take that sword from the dying grasp of one President, to place it in the living grasp of another. May God make him faithful and true — save him from sin — endue him with power and grace to suffer and to do! And may *he* not bear the sword in vain. There must be no vindictiveness — but there must be stern justice meted out. There must be some severity — otherwise the magistrate *will* bear the sword *in vain.* Let nothing "lash us into the meanness of revenge." But, on the other hand, let nothing seduce our Government into a criminal weakness and forgetfulness of its responsibilities to God. Let the deceived go free — but let the deceivers receive the due reward of their deeds. As a writer most forcibly says:

"We shall not act in the line of God's moral government, unless we treat this awful crime of rebellion in such a manner as, at the same, to show its hideous and fearful wrong. . . . . We must certainly do nothing which will foster in the Southern mind the delusion that this rebellion was a glorious, though unsuccessful, effort to be free. . . . . We must not treat it as if it were a fair fight for an equally honorable object: and as if now, in the midst of victory, we could afford to make light of its cause, and encourage them to think well of themselves, because their bravery has offset their wrong. . . . We should adopt a policy of expatriation and disfranchisement"

[I would use other and stronger words, meaning other and stronger things] "of those wicked leaders and conspirators, and especially those who had been in the service, and enjoyed the honors and emoluments of Government, who have involved the rebel States in this fearful guilt, and all the country in this bitter woe. . . . . Let us not fail to exhibit the majesty of calm and unimpassioned justice."

Let me now conclude, as I began, by quoting from the last Inaugural Address, pronounced by Mr. Lincoln on the 4th of March:

"'Woe unto the world because of offences, for it must needs be that offences come, but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh.' If we shall suppose that American slavery is one of these offences, which in the Providence of God must needs come, but which having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove; and that He gives to both North and South this terrible war as the woe due to those by whom the offence came; shall we discern that there is any departure from those Divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribed to Him?

"Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away.

"Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled up by the bondman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be

said, that 'the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.'"

It was a marvellous Providence that added the blood of our martyred leader to that ocean nearly full. And the time rendered it still more striking. The great rebel army was annihilated—almost the last sea-port captured—the last great battle fought: Northern blood and Southern blood had gone to swell a common tide: when the blood of him who was the rightful President of North and South alike is added to the rest. Wonderful are the dealings of GOD! Inscrutable are His judgments! But still they are "true and righteous altogether"!

O GOD, Merciful Father, who despisest not the sighing of a contrite heart, nor the desire of such as are sorrowful; mercifully assist our prayers which we make before Thee in all our troubles and adversities, whensoever they oppress us; and graciously hear us, that those evils which the craft and subtlety of the devil or man worketh against us, may, by Thy good providence, be brought to naught; that we, Thy servants, being hurt by no persecutions, may ever more give thanks unto Thee in Thy holy Church; through JESUS CHRIST our LORD. Amen.

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